

## Challenging State Academic Standards and Assessments

### **Evidence of state adoption of Content Standards, Alternative Achievement Standards, English Language Proficiency Standards**

The Board of Public Education is responsible for adopting standards of accreditation for Montana schools. See [§20-2-121](#) and [§20-7-101](#), Montana Code Annotated (MCA) and Article X, sec. 9(3)(a) of the Montana Constitution. Content standards are part of the accreditation standards. The Board of Public Education adopts a schedule, process, and criteria for standards revision to assure Montana citizens that its public schools are providing all children of our great state with a well-rounded education founded on challenging academic standards.

The following list shows the adoption dates for the most recent content standards in each content area:

Arts standards, adopted 2016  
Health and Physical Education standards adopted 2016  
Science standards adopted 2016

English Language Arts and Literacy standards adopted 2011  
Mathematics standards adopted 2011  
English Language Proficiency standards adopted 2011

Information Literacy-Library Media standards adopted 2008  
Technology standards adopted 2008

Career and Technology Education standards adopted 2000  
Social Studies standards adopted 2000  
Workplace Competencies standards adopted 2000  
World Languages standards adopted 1999

The Board of Public Education adopted English Language Proficiency (ELP) content and performance standards in 2011. These standards are found in the administrative rules of the Board of Public Education, ARM 10.53. 301 through 10.53.311. The ELP content standards cover language arts, mathematics, science and social studies as well as communication for social and instructional purposes within the school setting. The ELP performance standards describe expectations for the following levels of English language proficiency: entering, emerging, developing, expanding, briefing, and reaching.

As a member of the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC), Montana implemented the NCSC alternate achievement standards during the 2014-15 school year. Subsequently, Montana joined the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) consortium. The MSAA is based on the Core Content Connectors (CCCs) which are Alternate Achievement Standards (AAS) developed from the Common Core State Standards. It is intended for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The MSAA replaced CRT-ALT Reading and Math Tests.

In November 2016, the Board of Public Education established a new schedule for revising the content standards. The standards revision process supports Montana's longstanding commitment to equity of

opportunity for all students and ensures that the Montana education system prepares every child to graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college, careers, civic engagement, and lifelong learning.

The Board of Public Education’s schedule for revision of standards complies with [Administrative Rules of Montana \(ARM\) 10.53.104](#), which states:

1. Montana’s content standards shall be reviewed and revised on a recurring schedule.
2. A schedule for review of content standards shall be established as a collaborative process with the Office of Public Instruction and the Board of Public Education with input from representatives of accredited schools. The schedule shall ensure that each program area is reviewed and revised at regular intervals.
3. The standards review process shall use context information, guidelines, processes, and procedures facilitated by the Office of Public Instruction with input from representatives of accredited schools.

The Board of Public Education approved the following revision schedule:

| <b>Cycle</b>                               | <b>Content Standards</b>                                                              | <b>Research/ Review</b>   | <b>Revision</b>    | <b>Negotiated Rulemaking</b> | <b>Adoption</b> | <b>Begin Implementation</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Cycle I</b><br>September 2016-July 2019 | Social Studies, Career and Technical Education, Digital Literacy and Computer Science | September 2016-April 2017 | May-October 2017   | November 2017-March 2018     | September 2018  | <b>July 1, 2019</b>         |
| <b>Cycle II</b><br>January 2019- July 2021 | Mathematics, World Languages                                                          | January – April 2019      | May – October 2019 | November 2019 – March 2020   | September 2020  | <b>July 1, 2021</b>         |
| <b>Cycle III</b><br>January 2021-July 2023 | English Language Arts/Literacy and English Learners, Health & Physical Education      | January – April 2021      | May – October 2021 | November 2021 – March 2022   | September 2022  | <b>July 1, 2023</b>         |
| <b>Cycle IV</b><br>January 2023- July 2025 | Arts, Science                                                                         | January – April 2023      | May – October 2023 | November 2023 – March 2024   | September 2024  | <b>July 1, 2025</b>         |

This schedule may change based on resource availability or other factors.

In accordance with [§20-7-101](#), MCA, the Superintendent of Public Instruction will recommend proposed content standards to the Board of Public Education that are consistent with the processes, guidelines, and considerations outlined by the Board.

#### **State assessment for math, reading and science**

Montana administers the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment in mathematics and English language arts (ELA)/literacy for grades 3-8. Montana also administers the high school ACT with writing test in grade 11 for accountability purposes.

For science, Montana administers the MontCAS Science Criterion Referenced Test (CRT) in grades 4, 8, and 10.

#### **Are we using the assessments under the exemption for advanced middle school mathematics?**

No, since course offerings are a local control decision, OPI does not offer a statewide program for advanced math coursework at the middle school level.

#### **State assessments for students with disabilities**

Montana administers the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) in mathematics and ELA/Literacy for grades 3-8 and 11. MontCAS Science CRT-Alternate (ALT) is administered in grades 4, 8, and 10.

#### **English Learner assessment**

Montana administers the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) ACCESS for ELLs and the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs as its English language proficiency test. Both of these assessments test English language proficiency in the domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

#### **Will we approve any locally-selected nationally recognized high school assessments?**

No. Participation in the Smarter Balanced Summative assessment for grades 3-8 and the ACT with Writing for grade 11 is mandatory for all accredited schools. The Science CRT for grades 4, 8, and 10 is also mandatory.

#### **Do we provide advanced math coursework for middle school?**

Since course offerings are a local control decision, OPI does not offer a statewide program for advanced math coursework at the middle school level. OPI does offer many professional learning opportunities that would support a teacher who plans to teach these classes.

The Montana Digital Academy offers pre-algebra, algebra 1, and geometry. Local schools have the authority to accept any of these as advanced middle school coursework.

#### **Incorporating the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in these assessments**

To make MontCAS assessments accessible to all students, Montana incorporates the principles of Universal Design into all testing programs.

During the initial stages of the development process, the Bias/Sensitivity committee plays an important role by serving in an advisory capacity. Using specific training materials, committee members evaluate all proposed reading passages for their appropriateness for diverse learners. Subsequently, during item development, both the Item Review Committees and the Bias/Sensitivity Committees provide critical evaluations of all pretest reading passages and test items. This multi-staged review process provides

multiple opportunities to evaluate all reading passages and items for their appropriateness for the assessment. In this way, accessibility emerges as a dimension of primary consideration throughout the item development process.

The National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO) has published guidelines for universal design, and Montana has incorporated those principles for both the development of items and in the layout of our test forms. MontCAS has a wide array of accessibility resources which are integrated with classroom teaching and learning.

- Smarter Balanced Summative: Developed to support universal design for learning.
  - Accessibility resources: universal tools, teacher designated supports, and accommodations, all of which include resources for learning for all students.
  - The interim assessments have the same accessibility resources as the summative
  - Smarter Digital Library is designed specifically for universal learning with resources for universal and individualized teaching and learning. New to Smarter are connections within the system to the Digital Library resources.
  - Computer Adaptive summative
- Braille and Large print
  - Produced by American Printing House for the Blind (APH)
  - Translation and multiple round reviews by Braille proofreaders
  - Large-print adjustments including rescaling
- MSAA (Multi State Alternate Assessment )
  - Designed for significantly cognitively delayed students, it includes specific accessibility options, all of which are used in teaching and learning.
  - Employs a tier system so that each student moves toward the same content goals, but the universal design enables students to progress according to individual learning needs. It is a model for classroom universal design.
  - Extensive classroom resources are part of the system.
- CRT and CRT-ALT
  - Standard and non-standard accommodations.
  - The ALT is a model for classroom universal design
- ACT with Writing
  - ACT approved accommodations
  - State approved accommodations
  - Act Online Preparation (AOP) can be used by students individually or in groups.
- ACCESS for ELLS 2.0 (English Language Proficiency assessment) and Alternate
  - Accessibility resources for both assessment and instruction
  - This is the second most diverse group of students; therefore, the assessment is based on universal design as are the teaching and learning resources.
  - Extensive classroom resources and professional development are provided to educators.

### **Ensuring appropriate accommodations**

In order to ensure all students are provided with an equitable testing experience including full participation and an opportunity to demonstrate content knowledge, Montana provides a broad array of standard accommodations that include setting, scheduling, response and presentation. For each statewide assessment, an accessibility manual is provided that details universal design elements,

accessibility features, and accommodations and recommends appropriate uses and populations who would benefit from each accommodation or type of accommodation.

Each statewide assessment has a test administration training that includes modules on accommodations as a requirement of test administrator certification. The Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) requires that each Test Administrator (TA) passes a final quiz with an 80% minimum score prior to being able to access the test administration system. The MSAA has a documentation system for the 5 allowed accommodations.

In addition to test administration training modules, the OPI provides professional development on accommodations via webinars, which are recorded and posted to the OPI website for ease of access. The OPI also prepares additional supports such as FAQs and Quick Facts documents which are posted on the OPI Assessment pages under the appropriate assessment.

The OPI supports proper implementation of accommodations by suggesting that best practice in districts is to form an assessment team that includes a special education expert whose role is to understand the accommodations available for each assessment so that they can provide assistance within the district. The OPI also has an accommodations coordinator consultant who is available to work with districts on accommodations for the Smarter Balanced assessment and provides professional development via webinar and at conferences throughout the year.

#### **Providing assessments in other languages for English Learners**

Montana will not provide assessments in other languages for English Learners. The use of the Smarter Balanced Summative assessment meets Montana needs according to Montana demographic information. Montana demographics indicate small numbers of students speak a language other than English. In addition, the American Indian population in Montana comprises the majority of EL students are from numerous tribes with minimal or lost written languages. The Blackfeet and Crow languages are the two most prominent oral American Indian languages and most of these students require academic language support rather than a home language assessment. Montana uses the WIDA ELP assessments. Part of the contract is extensive professional development for classroom teachers to support student progression in English language proficiency.

#### **Grants for State Assessments and Related Activities**

The Montana Office of Public Instruction receives approximately \$3.63 million annually from the USED state assessments formula grant. The OPI will use the funding in the following manner:

- \$696,000 for its MOU with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium for use of the digital library, interim assessment and summative assessment items in grades 3-8;
- \$1.5 million for its contract with Measured Progress for the administration of the Smarter Balanced interim and summative assessments;
- \$933,000 for its contract with Measured Progress for the Science CRT;
- \$150,000 for its agreement with WIDA for the administration of the English Language Proficiency assessment; and
- \$353,000 for operating costs and for 5.3 FTE staff positions in the Measurement and Accountability Division and IT Services Division.